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INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY Yugoslavia

REPORT

SUBJECT Josip Vidmar, President of the Federation of Yugoslav Writers

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1. Before World War II Josip Vidmar lived in Ljubljana and was a literary critic and a collaborator of Slovenian literary reviews, Sodobnost (Contemporary Review - pro-Communist) and Ljubljanski Zvon (Ljubljana Bell - pro-Liberal), as well as a dramaturgist in the Ljubljana Drama Theater. He also translated several literary works from the English and Russian languages. He used to gather young talented writers around him and help them to have their works published. He was not a Communist but a "leftist liberal." 25X1

2. In 1941, after the German and Italian occupation of Slovenia, Josip Vidmar, six other non-Party leftists (including Joze Rus, the leader of "leftist liberals," and Edvard Kocbek, the leader of "leftist clericals"), and three Communist Party members (including Edvard Kardelj and the late Boric Kidric) set up in Ljubljana the so-called Liberation Front of Slovenia (Osvobodilna Fronta: OF) which later joined Tito's Communist movement. Josip Vidmar became President of the Executive Committee of the Liberation Front and Boric Kidric, its Secretary. In 1942 the members of the Executive Committee moved from Ljubljana underground headquarters into the Partisan headquarters located in the woods of Kocevski Rog near the Slovenian-Croatian border. From 1942 until 1945 Josip Vidmar was in Partisan territory. In 1943 he was elected a member of Tito's Partisan "parliament" in Jajce. After the war he became President of the Slovenian Parliament and has since had various high positions in Slovenian and Federal Parliaments. In 1948 or 1949, after the Tito-Cominform controversy, Vidmar became a Party member, and this act of his was given wide publicity by the Party in Slovenia: He received his Party membership card at a public ceremony, articles on him were published by Communist newspapers, etc.

3. In 1953, after the death of Dr. Franc Ramovs, an internationally known philologist, Josip Vidmar was elected President of the Slovenian Academy of Arts and Sciences. The members of the Academy were all but ordered by the Government and by the Party to elect him. He had already been a few years earlier the regime's candidate for the Presidency but had not succeeded in getting elected at that time. Ramovs, who was President before Vidmar, was a scientist, was strongly opposed to the regime's interference in the

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Academy, and was a symbol of the resistance of the institution to the Party line. Vidmar's election represented the victory of the Party over the Academy. Vidmar is not a scientist, not an authority in any field, and could not even become a member of the Academy under normal circumstances. The Party is using him to exercise its influence in the Academy and to have him carry out the Party line which is to increase activity in the field of applied sciences (nuclear physics, chemistry, electrical engineering, etc.) because they are of practical use to the regime's plans and to decrease activity in the field of exact sciences (philosophy, pure physics, etc.), the development of which is of no use and might become dangerous to the regime. Vidmar has already increased credits to the nuclear physics section, headed by Anton Peterlin, to the chemistry section, headed by Maks Samec, and to the electrical engineering section, headed by his brother Milan Vidmar. At the same time he has reduced credits for research in the field of exact sciences.

4. Vidmar spends very little time at the Academy, about half an hour every day. His pre-war tendencies of gathering young literati around him and of being their mentor and patron now prevail again. His influence in high government circles is great and he can help anyone he wants. He has the last word in the cultural field in Slovenia. Almost every night in his home he has parties 25X1
Foreign writers and artists visiting Slovenia regularly are his guests.

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5. Vidmar has a vast knowledge of world literature, but he is not a creative writer. In the spring of 1954 an acquaintance stated to him privately that, after so many years of experience, Vidmar also should confess that the Yugoslav regime is totaliterian and in no way different from the fascism against which the Liberation Front allegedly had fought. Vidmar only stated in reply that one had to be patient, that democrary grew slowly and had to undergo many painful operations. In the intimate circle of Vidmar's friends, it is known that Vidmar has a great desire to travel to the U.S. and to study life in America. He does not want to go there as a representative of the regime but as a private person and is waiting for a good excuse to do so. About two years ago he travelled to France and Belgium accompanying his wife who went on a concert tour to those two countries.

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6. Vidmar lives at #1 Cesta na Roznik, Ljubljana in the former Villa Dukic which he received from the Government. He has two cars at his disposition: a Mercury and a Chevrolet. Vidmar has a son named Tit by his first marriage who is about 25 years old and works at the newspaper Slovenski porocevalec in Ljubljana. Vidmar divorced his first wife and married Bogdana Stritar, an opera singer, either during the war when they were both with the Partisans or right after the war. She is about 38 years old and comes from a well-known Ljubljana family.

7. Josip Vidmar has three brothers. Before World War II one of his brothers owned a textile factory in Ljubljana which produced stockings and socks. After the war he "donated" the factory to the state and in return received a life sinecure. Milan Vidmar, a second brother, is the head of the Electrical Institute of the Academy of Arts and Sciences and a professor of electrical engineering at the University of Ljubljana. He 25X1
is commercially minded, and not a Party member. Ciril Vidmar, the third brother, is the literary manager of the Slovenian state publishing house (Drzavna Zalozba Slovenije) and a Party member. During World War II he was arrested by Italians, confined in Italy, later escaped to Switzerland (presumably in 1943), and was confined there as a refugee until the end of the war when he returned to Ljubljana.



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Comment: Before World War II Vidmar used to hold a sort of literary "salon" in his house in Ljubljana. He helped young writers, but at the same time he tried to influence their writing and to tie them into a bond of loyalty towards him, based on their gratitude. He was a ruthless enemy of those who first accepted his help and then went their own way. These attitudes of his were ascribed to his obsessive ambition to become the arbiter of Slovenian culture and to his inferiority complex produced by his inability to write creatively and by his desperate desire to do so. Vidmar was one of the people who were called "cultural bolsheviks", i.e. they tried to introduce leftist ideas into literature and art. They were considered as a cultural Communist fifth column and were in some cases witting and in other cases unwitting tools of the underground Communist propaganda machine.

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